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**A. V. ALLEN,**

**NEEDS RIFLE CLUBS**

**America Far Behind Other Nations in Encouraging Marksmen.**

**HAS NOW FORTY-SEVEN CLUBS**

**Switzerland Has Three and a Half Thousand Clubs, Despite Her Small Population--English Government Aids Associations.**

WASHINGTON, March 11.—(Special Correspondence.) One only need know the history of this country and understand what military efficiency means to realize how tremendously important it is that our citizens should be more or less familiar with modern arms.

Skill with weapons spells strength in war. It is said that a large percentage of the volunteers in the late war had never fired a military rifle before entering the service. It is this class of young men the National Rifle Association is desirous instructing in rifle shooting organizing them into rifle clubs.

Experience so far gained in the rifle club movements has shown that these clubs are a help to National Guard enlistments, members, in many cases joining the guard for the practice in shooting they thus secure. The great advantage of the rifle club is that it offers an open door to the man whose pressure of civilian vocation renders it impossible for him to attend drills and camp of instruction.

The United States has forty seven organized government clubs with

a membership of about 3,000 (not clubs). The little republic of Switzerland, with its three and one half millions of population, has 3,656 clubs, with a membership of 133,486. England has 670 clubs with a membership of 43,225. Data concerning the number of clubs in France, Italy, Brazil and the Argentine Republic, countries where great interest is taken in this matter, are not available. Switzerland gives its rifle clubs a money appropriation of about \$200,000 annually, with this expenditure 142,704 finished marksmen were turned out in 1905.

The English government gives its National Rifle Association free ammunition and much indirect assistance in renting target facilities, and detailing regular army officers and men to assist in running the annual matches at Bisley.

From the King, the Prince of Wales, and prominent citizens generally, county and colonial subscriptions, banks, business houses, etc., are received donations for the National Rifle Association of Great Britain to the extent of from \$15,000 to \$20,000 annually. The Association has a surplus of \$189,000. to its credit.

The Dominion of Canada gives a grant of \$15,000 annually to its National Rifle Association; Italy appropriates \$15,000 to her Rifle Association annually, and France gives even more than this to her federation of rifle clubs. The United States appropriates for the National Rifle Association of America—nothing. To the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice is annually given \$5,000 for the expense of its members, and for the prizes in the National Matches.

The regular army and military are well taken care of, but nothing has ever been done in this country to foster civilian rifle clubs except what the National Rifle Association of America has done. This has been in a very small way only, owing to the lack of funds, the only recourse available being the small annual income

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from membership fees and dues. If the movements toward civilian rifle clubs is to meet with any measure of success in the United States it would seem necessary that some inducements should be offered for citizens to organize clubs, in the way of arms and ammunition, permission to use the government and State ranges, prizes for excellence in competition shooting, and assistance toward the building of small ranges.

In 1904, in Switzerland, 12,000 boys were organized into shooting corps. Reckoning according to population if the Swiss system existed in the United States, there would be nearly 300,000 boys instructed in rifle shooting, and if shooting clubs existed with us in similar proportion as in Switzerland, the membership would attain to nearly 5,000,000. Switzerland has 3,200 communes (counties), and 2,735 ranges; the United States has, roughly speaking, 3,000 counties and only about 260 ranges. A bill introduced by Representative Wiley, of Alabama, contemplates a range for each congressional district. We have a number of states that do not own ranges even for the use of their organized militia. This defect will, in a measure, be corrected through the recent act of Congress increasing the annual appropriation for themill-

itary to \$2,000,000, and requiring the States to use at least 25 per cent of their allotment for building rifle ranges and practice. A State may use its total allotment for this purpose, if it sees fit to do so. Under this law many of the States have begun and others will soon begin the building of ranges, and it is hoped that when completed they will be thrown open to the use of members of civilian clubs under proper regulations.

The National Rifle Association has inaugurated a policy of working in close harmony with the military authorities of the States, of hardening its sphere of influence by securing life members, and by forming new clubs. Officers have been established at 299 Broadway, New York, with the Secretary in charge. If the association receives the proper co-operation and support we will very soon have in this country many thousands of "National Marksmen," as the members of rifle clubs are called who qualify under the code adopted, using the army title, and it will never be said again that at least 85 per cent of the volunteers (as it is believed to have been the case in the last war) had never fired a rifle before enlistments. General Washington's maxim that "to be prepared for warred results,

is the most effective means to promote peace is being followed by advocating and promoting rifle shooting among our citizens.

In his message to Congress the President has this to say: "We should establish shooting galleries in all the large public and military schools, should maintain national target ranges in different parts of the country, and should in every way encourage the formation of rifle clubs throughout the country." This is not the first time the president has put himself on record as in favor of promoting rifle shooting among the citizens of the country. Not only the President, but Secretary of War, Mr. Taft, Secretary Root, General Oliver, Assistant Secretary of War, and many men prominent in the affairs of the country have also recognized the importance from the standpoint of national defense, of this subject, and the necessity of something being done to bring about the results for which the National Rifle Association of America has been striving for years. Public interest must be aroused, the people of the country must understand the great importance of this work, and action of Congress must follow to fully attain the des-

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